

O 281337Z SEP 05  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4604  
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 005122

PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU  
DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/PPD: DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV PREL KPAQ SY  
SUBJECT: SARG DENIES HAVING THREATENED MURR

¶1. (U) The official Syrian Press Agency (SANA) September 28 published a denial of statements attributed to Lebanese Defense Minister Elias Murr in which he said that Syrian intelligence officials in Lebanon threatened him months before he was severely injured in a car-bombing assassination attempt. Murr made his accusation in an interview he gave in Europe after the maiming of Lebanese journalist May Chidiac in a September 25 Beirut car bombing.

¶2. (U) The SANA statement quoted an anonymous "information source" denouncing Murr's statements and calling them "lies and fabrications." The source said the Murr statement contradicts "the simplest rules of credibility and facts." The source also expressed astonishment that Murr would try to spoil the positive atmosphere created by Syrian cooperation with the Mehlis team investigating the assassination of Hariri. The source was quoted as saying that Murr was guilty of joining the chorus of those "accusing Syria right and left."

¶3. (U) The SANA statement was carried on the front page in all three Arabic-language dailies, as well as on the front page of the English-language daily Syria Times (all government-owned).

SECHE